

## "They told me directly that the task is to remove Trump from the election"

### **Diplomat Andriy Telizhenko - on the interference of Ukrainian authorities in the American elections**

[Nadezhda Sass](#) 12:53, [June 12, 2018](#)



Ukrainian Embassy in Washington

The Ukrainian Embassy in the United States is located in an old brick mansion on the very corner of M Street in the prestigious Georgetown area.

In this building, George Washington signed an agreement with a group of landowners on the allocation of land for the creation of the metropolitan district of Columbia.

The embassy even keeps a copy of the symbolic key to Washington. Here began the American capital. It also started the story, which for two years this city has been shaking politically.

Sometimes it seems that the entire current political process in the United States revolves around the “Russian investigation” of special prosecutor Robert Muller. And the investigation, in turn, is strung [on charges against the former head of the campaign headquarters of trump Paul Manafort](#) .

Well, the accusations basically contain the information that the Ukrainian embassy helped the Democrats, who were eager to get dirt on their opponent.

We decided to talk with a unique witness to this story - a former employee of the diplomatic mission of Ukraine in Washington, Andrey Telizhenko.

The world first recognized his name in January last year, when his testimony about the interference of Ukrainian authorities in the American elections on the side of Hillary Clinton formed [the basis of the article in the authoritative publication Politico](#) .



Andrey Telizhenko

This is the first interview of Andrey to the Ukrainian edition. At one time, Telizhenko came to work in the United States at the invitation of Ambassador Valery Chaly. But on the issue of inclusion in the electoral process, their paths diverged sharply.

Now Andrey works as a political consultant in the USA and Canada and can afford some frankness. How much can one be frank in a story that affects so many of the powerful.

**- Let's start with the main, perhaps, question: does the current US Trump administration have any concerns with Ukraine?**

- Indeed, there is fatigue from Ukraine in Washington. Our country is not in the second or even tenth place among the US priorities. And the problem is only aggravated by the fact that Ukrainian politicians who come to Washington bring with them the same complaints and grievances as they did a few years ago. One of the main mistakes of Petro Poroshenko in the American direction was the refusal to replace the ambassador in Washington. Our embassy there today has become an obstacle to the development of relations between Ukraine and the United States. Recall that before there was no need to hire any lobbying companies, like the same BGR, to maintain a dialogue with the White House. The Obama administration had excellent relations at the level of political leadership.

**“Do you have an understanding why he did not go to replace the ambassador?”**

“It's hard for me to understand.” Petro Poroshenko is well versed in international relations, and the need to replace a representative in the United States is too obvious. I do not want to think that it is only a matter of personal loyalty and long-term acquaintance with Valery Chaly. Personal interests in such matters can in no way be put higher than state ones. And it surprises so many in Washington. Indeed, from their side there were fairly transparent hints. The same article in Politico last January. And she was given an additional impetus last July by the [personal statement of Trump](#) and the White House press secretary about the need to investigate the interference of the Ukrainian embassy in the presidential election. The signal was clear: change the ambassador, and everything will be fine.

Understand correctly, saying this, I do not pursue any personal interests. Although Ambassador Chaly recently walks around Washington and tries to tell everyone that I am a "Russian spy." It is ridiculous that the diplomatic mission is directly engaged in the fight against people who have a different opinion from the position of the Presidential Administration.

Why was replacement of the ambassador so necessary? Because everyone in Washington knows how he personally played on the side of Hillary Clinton. And now our head of state cannot hold a full meeting in the White House. The one that was last year did not meet the basic requirements of the protocol for this level of meeting. At the official visit of the president, the first lady should accompany him, and Donald Trump himself should meet him in front of the White House, as happens in the case of visits by other heads of state.

After all, Poroshenko met with Trump just in the midst of a meeting on Ukrainian topics held by the then National Security Advisor Herbert McMaster. And after that, our president came out and

gave, as we all remember, a briefing behind the fence of the White House. Yes, there was a photograph, there was a conversation, but this was not a full-fledged meeting of this level. The Americans themselves by this fact simply showed their "good" attitude towards Ukraine.

**- That is, they could not but accept Poroshenko, but they already accepted as they wanted ...**

- Yes. The meeting was organized through the influential lobbying structure of the BGR. Advisor to Trump Cohen, contrary to the claims of the BBC, had nothing to do with her organization. Cohen has the only relationship with Ukraine through his wife, who is just from Kharkov.

**- But what about the amount of 400 thousand dollars that [he allegedly received for organizing this meeting](#) ?**

- This is the official payment of BGR. Prior to this, Pavel Klimkin had a photo with Trump - this is also through the official payment of BGR. The embassy in this situation was overboard. Unfortunately, this was not even at the time of Yanukovych, when we had cool relations with the United States. All the same, even then the embassy had access to various American government structures.

Under Obama, the key figure in the Ukrainian direction was Vice President Joe Biden. Next, a hierarchy of officials and related grant funds, which were coordinated by Victoria Nuland, was built.

**- Who is now part of the conditional "Ukrainian team" in the United States, who is responsible for politics in this area?**

- Now we are at the level of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Which is not so bad, but at this level - most of the countries of the world. Previously, Vice President Joe Biden dealt with Ukraine. He had both personal and political interests in the Ukrainian direction. At the moment, relations between Ukraine and the United States are coordinated at the level of the State Department, as such, there is no integrated "Ukrainian team" in Washington. Also, the newly appointed national security adviser John Bolton is trying to figure out the problems of Ukrainian realities. But he is not so "in the subject" as we would like.

**- What is the role of lobbyists now in the development of policies in the Ukrainian direction? The Paul Manafort affair seems to have cooled interest in the lucrative Ukrainian market, or am I mistaken?**

- In accordance with the American law "On the registration of foreign agents", all lobbyists must notify their organization in the interests of foreign politicians such as FARA. If earlier many neglected this, then after the accusations against Manafort, all lobbyists began to 100% try to register there properly. Now they very carefully check the client and the origin of the means by which he will pay for the work. In this sense, Ukraine was on the list of "toxic" countries, since everyone is afraid to become involved in the "Russian investigation" related to Moscow's possible interference in US elections.

**- Are there lobbyists in the States whom our politicians have “thrown” in one way or another?**

- Unfortunately there is. If you remember, at the beginning of last year, Yulia Tymoshenko had a meeting with Donald Trump on the sidelines of a Prayer Breakfast. And although the meeting was only five minutes long, Trump was quite prepared for it. Moreover, the very fact of meeting with one of the opposition leaders was even unprecedented before the US president met with government officials. And this was a signal to Ukraine that something was wrong with us. But after that, Yulia Tymoshenko did not fulfill her obligations to some influential people in Washington. And later, when she flew to a meeting with US Presidential Advisor Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump at Trump's villa in Florida, she was denied an audience the day before the appointed date.

**- Offended lobbyists?**

- The question is not even offense. And the fact that politicians of this magnitude overseas are expected to comply with this word. And even though her team set up Yulia Tymoshenko more on this issue, she was seriously spoiled by this image.

**- Now about intervention in the American elections in more detail. The Poroshenko team already had excellent relations with the Obama administration. What was the logic of trying to please the Democrats even more by participating in the campaign against Trump, or did the request for help come from overseas?**

- About our power, it should be noted that Poroshenko is mentally more similar to Trump than probably any other leader in the world. Both are businessmen who could have a great relationship. But our government fell on the hook of a request for support from another team, decided to play big, without having a global strategy. This led to a miscalculation. The Ukrainian Embassy in the United States could either not cooperate with the Democrats in this direction, or move on. Chaly decided to take the second path, although I strongly advised him not to. I believe that he crossed all the unspoken diplomatic borders in this matter.

**- How did he explain such a decision?**

- Chaly convinced himself that Trump is a pro-Russian candidate. Without serious evidence. He probably wanted to show the Clinton team that he is more of himself and can claim more significant roles. In communicating with him, I did not understand his position: why it is possible to maintain a dialogue with all other candidates from the Republican Party, except for Trump. It's about the primaries stage.

Perhaps his assistant Oksana Shulyar had personal relations with people from the Democratic headquarters. It was Shulyar who introduced me to [Alexandra Chalupa of the Democratic Party](#) and instructed me to collect and transmit information about Paul Manafort to her.

**- The goal is to discredit Trump?**

- Not only to discredit. According to Alexandra Chalupa, and this was already written about in the media, the goal was to get Donald Trump off the pre-election race. Hold a special meeting of the US Congress committee in the fall of 2016 and achieve the withdrawal of his candidacy. This was told to me in plain text. Shulyar told me in this direction to keep in touch with Chalupa. Chaly knew everything perfectly and did not hinder this. As ambassador, he had to stop it. I refused to participate, and after that I did not communicate with Chalupa.

**- After the start of the Manafort scandal, the media wrote that the latter was one of the main lobbyists of the pro-Western course under Yanukovych. From abandoning stockpiles of highly enriched uranium to attracting the American energy giants Chevron and ExxonMobil to Ukraine, Manafort was said to some extent to all this. Why, despite all this, did the Democrats decide to seek Paul's ties with Russia precisely in his Ukrainian career stage?**

“Paul Manafort has always been an odious figure for them.” By virtue of his many years of exceptional role in the ranks of the Republicans. And now they decided to win it back. I am sure it will soon be proved that politically he didn't do anything bad and that he doesn't have any special ties with Russia. As for financial and tax issues, let US law enforcement agencies and courts deal with this. And what is happening now is that Special Attorney Mueller is trying to tense the situation on the eve of the US Congress.

**- And how do you personally assess the role of Manafort in Ukraine?**

- My sources informed that when the Maidan began, Manafort very strictly demanded that Yanukovych stop any military actions against the protesters, predicting the risk of the situation developing before the war stage. This is what I know for sure and why I respect him. I can't say anything special on other issues, since I'm not familiar with Manafort. But I know about his actions in this dramatic situation from reliable sources.

**- In development of the theme of Manafort. In diplomatic circles, rumors are circulating that Bankova, in contacts with the Trump administration, is [trying to blame all the blame for discrediting Manafort](#) in the summer of 2016 on the activities of People's Deputy [Sergei Leshchenko, who spoke about Manafort in the context of the "black bookkeeping" of the Party of Regions](#).**

“Yes, I know about that.” Just recently, a senior official was on a visit to Washington, who was trying to draw this line. They stubbornly want to throw all the dogs on our anti-corruption. In this regard, the question arises: who handed Leshchenko this so-called "black bookkeeping"? I do not believe that she was just accidentally found somewhere. It was beneficial for someone to play along with the Democrats during the election.

**- Were there any attempts by the Ukrainian authorities to build relations with the headquarters of Trump and the Republicans as a whole?**

- In general, work with the Republican Party was carried out. But directly with the headquarters of Trump - she was not.

**- Is it possible to say that the Trump administration is still offended by Kiev? Experts close to the Ukrainian authorities say that everything is already fine. And even almost better than it was under the previous president. Here, they say, trump "Javelins" gave, but Barack Obama did not go for it. How do you comment on this?**

- Resentment, of course, remained. What we see in Washington's actions is positive, this is mainly the inertia of the achievements of the previous administration. The Obama administration was preparing to give us the same lethal weapons. Unfortunately, there is nothing fundamentally new. And in the White House itself there is no serious discussion of Ukraine as an interesting partner. As for weapons, many US countries are given modern weapons for much larger amounts without preconditions. I am not even talking about Israel. Egypt, for example, has been allocated arms worth more than \$ 2 billion a year for 20 years. And we rejoice at a budget of \$ 350 million per year.

As for the Javelins, I personally assisted in the organization and attended in the spring of 2014 at a meeting of Senator John McCain with First Deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Yarema, who worked as an adviser. The meeting thoroughly discussed the supply of not only these anti-tank systems, but also other lethal and non-lethal military products. During this meeting the idea of "Javelins" appeared.

By the way, an interesting story is connected with this, why exactly "Javelins". Ukraine needed a symbol of support. During the war in Afghanistan, anti-Soviet partisans were given the Stinger air defense system. Ukraine - Javelin anti-tank systems. In fact, from the Ukrainian side there were 27 lists of various weapons: from grenade launchers to fighter jets. But a single realistic list was needed. And it was these complexes that made up its basis.

**- What is your forecast regarding the actions of Americans on the eve of the presidential elections in Ukraine? Who will Washington bet on, or will he not explicitly show his sympathy for anyone at all?**

"The Americans are still thinking very hard." In principle, of the available rating candidates, they especially do not like anyone. And this applies not only to the position of the United States, but also Canada, the leading EU countries. I think they will, until the last moment, be determined with whom to deal.

Ukraine is in about the same position that Russia was in 1996: the current president has the same rating of 6%, the same willingness to attract anyone from the West to help him. This is where George Soros and many others are trying to play. We are such a platform for experimentation: both in the field of various radical liberal reforms, and in the field of politics. And only in the forces of the Ukrainians themselves to change the situation for the better.